



Stephen Twigg MP

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Chris Wormald
Permanent Secretary
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
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16 August, 2012

Dear Chris,

School Playing Fields

You will be aware of the decision on the 19 July by the Secretary of State to water down key regulations regarding the provision of outdoor space and playing fields in schools in England, as contained in The School Premises (England) Regulations 2012.

Firstly, I am concerned by reports that the Secretary of State did not consult the independent School Playing Fields Advisory Panel on these changes. Could you confirm that this did not happen and whether it would be considered good ministerial practice to consult with the expert panel?

Secondly, in response to a Freedom of Information request on school playing fields dated 23 April 2012, and updated on 8 August the Department responded as follows: "the number of applications [for school playing field disposals] received since May 2010 is 22. Approval has been given for 19 applications and 3 are under consideration."

However, an investigation by the Daily Telegraph has found that the true number of disposals since May 2010 is as follows: 35 applications to sell school playing fields between 18 May 2010 and 22 July 2012, of which 30 were approved, 2 rejected, 1 withdrawn and 2 are outstanding.

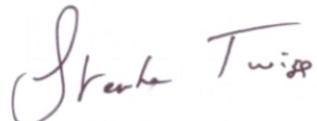
I am deeply concerned by the fact that the Secretary of State has failed to disclose around a third of the playing field sell-offs that have been approved since the General Election.

Thirdly, it was also reported in The Daily Telegraph that in five cases, the Secretary of State overturned the advice of the independent School Playing Fields Advisory Panel to approve the disposal of a school playing field.

In the interest of what the Prime Minister once termed, "a new era of transparency", I would ask that you release all submissions and correspondence regarding these disposals, including via private email accounts, so that we can understand why the Secretary of State overruled his own expert panel.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen Twigg".

Stephen Twigg MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Education